

Spring Villa ^{South of}
Seven Miles ~~From~~ Opelika, Ala.

Lee Co.

HABS No. 16-508

HABS

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 16

Historic American Buildings Survey
E. Walter Burkhardt, District Officer
Ala. Polytechnic Inst., Auburn, Ala.

Project #16-508
SPRING VILLA HOUSE
Seven miles south of Opelika,
Lee County, Alabama

HISTORICAL DATA:

Built about 1851 ?

Ownership:

Penn Yonge built this home and was the original owner. He was his own architect.

The Chewalka Lime Company purchased this plantation home from the family of Penn Yonge.

The Renfro Estate next owned this home.

The City of Opelika now owns this house and plantation estate surrounding it.

Penn Yonge:

After a trip to California, during the "gold rush", Penn Yonge settled on a beautiful piece of wooded land, near a little village named for his family, Yongsborough. At first he must have lived in a log cabin. But later he built a more pretentious home on his wooded plantation, near a very fine spring.

Here he developed a large artificial lake, said to have covered thirty acres. All the way around this lake were beautiful weeping willows, imported shrubs and trees. In the center of the lake was an island covered with lilies and roses.

Mr. Yonge had stables and a race track. He was a good sport and entertained effusively.

The Cotton Centennial of 1874 was held here. It was at this time that the plantation estate came to be called Spring Villa.

Park and Picnic Grounds:

For some time, before the City of Opelika purchased this estate, the place became famous as a

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park and picnic grounds for the people of the surrounding country. This is what caused the City of Opelika to buy this really beautiful sylvan estate.

Boy Scout Camp:

For quite a number of years, Spring Villa, as the whole plantation is now called, has been the summer camping ground for the Boy Scouts of the Central Alabama Area.

OWA Project:

Today, 1934, the Civil Works Administration has renovated the grounds and home. The renovation of this old home is ~~expected to be finished soon~~. Over a hundred acres of ground are being cleared of underbrush to form the new park site.

This will serve as a public park under permit for nine counties and visitors from all over the State. In addition it will be used as a summer camp for Boy Scouts, 4H Club girls and boys, college and school students. It will be under the supervision of the Central Alabama Area Scout Council.

Source of Material:

Peter Brannon, Curator of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Alabama.

Mrs. P. P. Brooks, Opelika, Alabama.

Opelika Daily News, December 18, 1933.

Reviewed 1936, H.C.F.

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ARCHITECTURAL MERIT AND DATA:

This building was not chosen on account of its architectural or historical merit, but because it was about to be renovated into a club house as a C.W.A. project. It was thought wise to measure and draw this building to preserve its character, as still seemed apparent. The building exhibits an unusual roof treatment, which almost stamps it with Swiss Chalet character. This character is accentuated by the original use of ten balconies, which is considerable, considering the small size of the building.

The window trim and door trim show a well proportioned Greek Revival use. There are evidences of a one story porch stretching across the front. Conjectural speculation, however, makes it a difficult problem to determine just what the appearance of this veranda type porch may have been.

Source of Material:

E. Walter Burkhardt, District Administrator, HABS,
Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Alabama.

Reviewed 1936, H.C.F.